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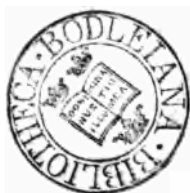




# POEMS OF PAST YEARS.

BY

SIR ARTHUR HALLAM ELTON, BART.



LONDON:

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# P O E M S.

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## THE HEART'S SACRIFICE.

In a deep vale, whose grassy slopes  
Were washed by streamlets fresh and clear,  
And belted by o'erarching elms,  
Two sisters dwelt from year to year,

And, like two flowers upon one stem,  
Both trembling now, and now both still,  
Together felt the hush of peace,  
Together shrank from earthly ill:

Fair, though not formed in classic mould,  
Nor yet with marble lustre wan,  
But pure as the first blush of day  
A rosy sweetness o'er them shone.

B

They had known sorrow : left when young  
To distant relatives in trust,  
Scarce wakened to a sense of life  
When those who gave that life were dust ;

So when they passed that churchyard, dark  
With drooping trees, the gentle pair  
Would press each other's hands, to think  
Whose moveless forms lay buried there.

Poor orphans they ! They little knew  
The world where all men seek their own,  
And pressing on in selfish haste,  
Jostle together and fall prone :

To them the sight of others' woes  
Was as a message from the Lord  
To put the thought of self aside,  
And do some good in deed or word.

The loveliness which lives and dies  
On earth's fair breast, they knew and felt ;  
Felt, too, whate'er sublime or strange  
Above, beneath, or round them dwelt.

To them flowers, shrubs, and all the tribe  
Of harmless animals were dear:  
They loved each creature that showed signs  
Of gratitude, or gentle fear.

So did they live, until a change  
Descended on their way of life,  
And all their quiet joys grew faint  
Before a dizzy, dreamlike strife ;

As when the melancholy moon  
Glides up into the dome of night,  
She casts a paleness o'er the stars,  
And robs them of their keener light.

It was a stranger, young, but skilled  
In all life's ways, who idly came  
To lounge through summer's drowsy time,  
Here where none knew his rank or name.

He on the pages of his mind  
Had traced sweet thoughts of varied hue,  
Gay, tender, mirthful, which at will  
With careless grace he spread to view.

He had felt deeply, thus he knew  
The windings of the paths which lead  
Obscurely to another's heart,  
And mastered them with quiet speed.

He chanced to find the shady home  
Where these two sisters thus pursued  
Their gentle course, and having met,  
No longer thought of solitude.

But few weeks past, and he had grown  
A welcome and familiar friend—  
One whose existence seemed with theirs  
From very childhood now to blend :

He read the verse which thrills us through,  
Like murmurs of the sea at night,  
Taught them all science that can show  
Earth's beauty clearer to the sight;

Flowers, mosses, ferns, and purple heaths,  
And smooth shells delicately curved,  
Spars pure as snow, and crystals rare,  
They sought and carefully preserved;

And beautiful sea-creatures strange  
Which cling to wave-worn rocks, and spread  
Their feathery arms to gather food,  
These cherished they at home and fed:

Together would they range the paths  
Which glimmered through the dusky wood,  
Together watch the setting sun  
With crimson sheet the western flood.

Not long with harmless courtesy,  
Nor innocent exchange of thought,  
Nor pleasant mirth, nor glances sweet,  
Was that communion only fraught;

For gazing on his face there glided  
Into their inmost secret soul  
A sudden knowledge, full of pain,  
Yet joy they scarcely could control.

Joy throbbed within their hearts, and lay  
Upon their spirits mixed with fear,  
And suddenly the earth seemed changed,  
Changed to the eye and to the ear.

Thus first one unknown feeling wove  
Between these two a subtle veil,  
Hiding the truth which dimmed their eyes,  
And made their voices pause and fail:

Each knew not that the other loved,  
For on herself she laid the blame,  
That in their voice and eyes they seemed  
Not to each other quite the same.

It was one night, when drearily  
The moon shone on their snow-white bed,  
The elder saw her sister raise  
With feverish start her weary head,

And gaze around, and then descend,  
And fall upon her knees before  
The casement, through whose narrow panes  
The moonbeams in cold stream did pour:

She raised her hands towards the sky,  
O'er her white bosom flowed her hair  
In yellow tresses, which the moon  
Tinged to a pale and lurid glare :

She spoke : with sighs and sobs at first,  
And in a voice where tenderness  
With sadness and with terror strove,  
But as she spoke her sobs grew less :

“ Oh, aid me ! Oh, have mercy, Father !  
I sink upon my knees in grief ;  
My soul grows faint: oh, let me not  
Fall from Thee like a withered leaf !

“ I cannot pray as I was wont,  
I fear I am not wholly Thine ;  
One earthly thought still moves between  
My spirit and all thoughts divine:

“ The thought is torment, yet 't is sweet—  
I cannot wish it were not sweet ;  
Oh, draw me to Thyself, dear Father,  
And let this poor heart cease to beat !”

It was enough : she told her thoughts,  
And whispered in a faltering tone  
The name of him, so dear to both,  
As though she deemed herself alone.



Each word into her sister's brain  
Sank with an eager burning pang ;  
Her head throbbed, and within her ears  
A sound of rushing waters rang.

The shock was bitter ; yet ere morn  
She, whilst that dear companion slept  
In her fond arms a restless sleep,  
Grew calmer, and in silence wept.

For *him*, he loved. His spirit, dim  
With vulgar passion, like a flame  
In poisonous air, now once more shone  
With love of purer, nobler aim.

I know not why, but so it was—  
In love our will bears little part—  
The elder sister most had won  
The worship of his wasted heart:

And that same day in tranquil spot  
Together under leafy shade,  
He spoke, and for her virgin love  
In tender, broken accents prayed.

A shudder ran through all her frame ;  
The warm blood rushes to her cheeks,  
Then leaves them pale, as sunset leaves  
The snows that gleam on Alpine peaks ;

She clasped her trembling fingers closely,  
And then, with gesture almost stern,  
She drew back from his eager hand,  
And thus in anguish did return:—

“ To say I loved thee not were cruel—  
I will not tell a needless lie ;  
So, if 't will give thee pleasure, know  
I love ; and in that love shall die.

“ Nay, listen ! were my spirit stirred  
By deeper love than now is mine—  
Alas, that it were possible !—  
Know that I never would be thine !

“ Dear friend, I cannot speak my grief ;  
It cannot pass away in sighs,  
Nor words, nor looks, nor such hot tears  
As now are falling from my eyes.

"Best were it for us both, perhaps,  
That thou shouldst never know nor guess  
Why, leaning on the help of Heaven,  
I check my heart's deep tenderness ;

"But since I see by your wild eyes,  
And by the beating of your heart,  
Silence would cause thee too deep grief,  
I'll tell thee ere thou must depart."

Then gently grasping his loved hand,  
The while she lowered her voice, and cast  
A soothing glance upon his face,  
She told him what last night had passed.

She told him of her sister's love,  
That dear one who had lived with her  
Since first their childish hearts could feel,  
Or childish limbs could feebly stir.

How sweet, how precious to a girl  
A sister's love was, he must know ;  
To part was bitter, but to rob  
Her peace in parting doubly woe !

She need not, she was sure, go on,  
And reason with an anxious care :  
She spoke unto his heart, and knew  
Her words would find swift entrance there.

“ Beloved, leave me !” then she cried,  
And on her face such sorrow fell  
As never more may wholly pass—  
“ Leave me, and Heaven protect thee well !”

But he knew nothing, felt, nor spoke,  
By grief made as an infant weak,  
Till tears o'erfilled his dull glazed eyes,  
And he had force to move and speak.

The awe of virtue, long to him  
A visitation rare and strange,  
Stirred all his spirit to its depths,  
And wrought within a sudden change :

He fell upon his knees before her,  
And seized her hands, withdrawn not now,  
And kissed them with his passionate lips,  
And pressed them on his burning brow :

Then on her face, where love and woe  
Were mingled, one long look he cast,  
And saw her eyes meet his through tears,  
Then from her side for ever passed.

That night two gentle girls lay down  
In one another's arms entwined,  
Shedding sweet tears which, more than speech,  
Can tell the secrets of the mind.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

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It might have been some twenty years  
Since that young stranger last was seen,  
And o'er that valley summer cast  
Its cloud of foliage soft and green.

Into that dusky churchyard came  
One who seemed old through thought alone,  
And in his clear and tranquil eyes  
The peace and strength of virtue shone.

He moves along the pathway slowly,  
And through the leaves and branches looks,  
And underneath the waving grass,  
And into all dim shadowy nooks.

At length before a plain white slab  
He stops, and o'er his face there rushed  
The shadow of a bitter grief,  
Which once was clamorous—now is hushed :

A grief that long familiar grown  
Becomes a part of life, nor rends  
All reason from the brain, as when  
The heavy stroke at first descends.

These two dear creatures never yet  
Had passed from memory's twilight sphere :  
Before his eyes their forms still floated,  
Their voices hovered on his ear.

They had died young ! in the same grave  
Their fair, though mortal, shapes were placed,  
Near those they loved ; and on their tomb  
One loving hope for both was traced.

He lay down underneath the trees,  
And, looking towards the sun, whose light,  
Half lost in the green depth of leaves,  
Fell soft and broken on the sight,

He uttered words in measured tone,  
Whose modulations deep and low  
Ascended on the summer air,  
And spoke of peace no less than woe.

“ I was a creature steeped in crime  
When first I saw this blessed place,  
And used the talents God had given  
To make my very sins more base :

“ Myself I loathed, yet loved so well  
That all I asked for, that I gave ;  
And would not for another's peace  
One selfish wish consent to waive :

“ So crawling on through ways of mire,  
Quenching my thirst at bitter springs,  
God placed His hand upon my heart,  
And led me forth to nobler things :

“Through the dark shadow of my sin  
The tender light of one good deed  
Brought glimpses of a better state,  
And gave me comfort in my need.”

Then he arose, and pressed his hand  
Upon his heart, and firmly said:—  
“Patience! Have patience yet awhile!  
God loves and guards the vanished dead!”

Then through the leafy boughs he forced  
His rustling path, and scaled the hill;  
The sounds in distance died away,  
And all round that pale tomb was still.



## THE THIEF OF FAME.

THERE was a girl who, when the tired world slept,  
Often all night her happy vigils kept,  
And loved the silence and such stealthy light  
Her taper gave, sheltered from others' sight.  
She was a child of genius, and, though young,  
Melodious verse fell sweetly from her tongue,  
Which, though ne'er meant to meet a stranger's eye,  
She noted down with care lest it should die :  
And she would read and think, and as she read,  
Trace her swift-passing fancies ere they fled.

Few knew that thus she laboured, for men said,  
" Though life is in her limbs her mind is dead ;"  
With scorn the grandees of the village smiled—  
Which they called " pity"—on the " idiot child,"  
" The pretty innocent so prompt to fly,  
And shyly hide herself when friends drew nigh ;  
Who loathed what pleased well-nurtured children best,  
To hunt a butterfly or steal a nest ;

And when almost a woman took delight  
In climbing up the mountain's lonely height,  
Or rambling like a gipsy here and there,  
Loving a dark wood better than a fair."

The pious peasant, as he passed her by,  
Blessed her askance, and prayed she soon might  
die.

Her home was but a simple village inn,  
Yet had she taught herself much lore within,  
And worshipped by her parents, ev'n when young,  
Books, all she asked for, in her lap were flung ;  
Leaving her free from vulgar household cares,  
Unswayed by sapient frowns or wondering stares.  
Love guided them thus wisely ; they nor guessed,  
Nor toiled to guess the genius she possessed.  
So she was happy, and where'er she went  
Feared neither mortal hurt nor detriment.

But yet, as time passed on, her health grew frail :  
Her cheek was deeper crimson ; thin and pale  
Seem'd her small hands ; and all her features wore  
A settled look unlike those looks of yore,  
Sweet and yet serious. She had nought to fear,  
But grieved to leave those few who loved her here.

\* \* \* \* \*

The last departing thought which lingered o'er  
Her moveless lips, ere Death in fragments tore  
The chains which are the energies of Life,  
Was with Hope's patient sweet assurance rife.  
Her sobbing parents, and some tranquil swains,  
Attended to the grave her young remains.  
Prayers are read o'er, some whispers, and a sigh,  
And then the coffin doth in damp earth lie.  
The merry villagers went on their way,  
Some to the lazy plough, and some to play;  
The birds sang in the trees ; through wood and sward  
The mild west-wind its summer sweetness poured ;  
Bright shone the sun ; the streams gave the same  
          sound ;  
To their old task all living things are bound.  
The thoughts and scattered fancies she had framed  
In most melodious verse, still lay unclaimed ;  
Frail pages placed respectfully aside,  
Half in dull ignorance and half in pride,  
In a dark closet full of odds and ends,  
Drugs, spice, and dainties only meant for friends.  
But once it chanced a shrewd youth did alight  
At this old inn, doomed through a tedious night

To yawn uneasy on no bed of down,  
And count the hours ere he could gaze on Town.  
Ere morning broke he peevishly arose,  
And, hunting for some book to make him doze,  
A careless hand within the cupboard thrust,  
And found a packet sealed, and black with dust:  
He opened it and read, now here, now there,  
At first with haste, soon with attentive care:  
He read and mused, then once more tied and sealed  
The papers up, and in his desk concealed.  
When he departed there departed too  
Those faded leaves whose worth no others knew.  
Smiling he took them thence, and dreamed of fame,  
Nor cared he how he won it, so it came.

Then teemed the press with praises; who could tell  
That he had filched the thoughts that pleased so well?  
The great stooped tow'rds him with discerning smile,  
The vulgar trudged to see him many a mile;  
The world stared broadly: those who carped were  
hushed;  
And the good youth at his own merits blushed.  
Favoured, caressed, it had been well for him  
He had not thought his fame was yet too dim;

But praise intoxicates ; he soon disdained  
The wreath which impudence and craft had gained :  
He paused and pondered ; dizzy grew his brain ;  
“ Was it another, then, that wrote this strain ?  
Did I not give it energetic force,  
And breathe, in short, a soul into a corpse ?  
What I discovered was a dull dead weight :  
’T is time,” he cried, “ ’t is time I should create !”  
He wrote ; he published. Back the critics hung,  
And waited for each other to give tongue ;  
The few who dare to judge men at their ease,  
Not greatly anxious or to pain or please,  
In place of beauty’s sweet, soft, natural air  
Found a crude vulgar photographic stare ;  
Smart see-saw verse, mechanically spun,  
Which clever schoolboys scribble by the tun ;  
And promptly to this literary knave  
A welcome worthy of his merits gave ;  
Wonder, and scorn, and questions thick and fast  
Pierced him, and left him prostrate and aghast.  
But aid soon came. The world rose up alarmed,  
And rushed to rescue, with blind faith well armed,  
The injured bard who sweetly sang one song,  
And therefore must sing sweetly all life long ;

Dubbed his foes bitter, ignorant, and pert,  
And if they answered pelted them with dirt;  
Declared his earlier verses were mere shoots  
And buds of spring, but these the mellow fruits.

The wise withdrew to wait their own good time,  
And leave the thief himself to prove his crime.  
He, from the shock recovering slowly, gazed  
With milder eyes on rhymes so many praised:  
The ass enveloped in the lion's skin  
Had brayed discordant with triumphant din,  
Proclaiming who he was; but where's the harm?  
He brayed to asses, could he fail to charm?

Now whilst on great deeds bent, and works of  
fame,  
To please his patrons and put foes to shame,  
Wrapped in the folds of comfortable pride,  
One luckless morning he fell sick and died.  
The literary world was smit with woe,  
And one loud sob convulsed both high and low:  
Those who writ verses versified their pain;  
Those skilled in prose prosed in pathetic strain;

Some in cold stone embodied their despair,  
Or bade the canvas his mute visage wear.  
A melancholy mob in black costume,  
Bareheaded, thronged around his destined tomb,  
And scented handkerchiefs, as white as snow,  
In graceful sorrow fluttered to and fro ;  
The coffin, carved in Fashion's richest mode,  
Sank 'neath the marble of its proud abode,  
A pompous palace, whose height awed the eye :  
Who, to dwell thus, would hesitate to die ?

But she, the unknown, solitary child—  
The happy spirit, innocent and wild—  
Creatress of the thoughts which those who read  
Felt their hearts change, as if long grief were dead—  
Far other obsequies had wished or known ;  
Beneath no massive quaintly-fashioned stone,  
Rich in the pomp of dedicated praise,  
Whose gilt words dazzled man's revering gaze,  
Her simple coffin lay ; but 'neath long grass  
And trees that whisper as the night airs pass :  
A spot but marked by one green narrow mound,  
Which none might know from hundreds that lie  
round,

Save that the village girls, who mourned with tears  
The loss of one so fair, so young in years,  
Tended with care that strip of hallowed ground,  
Dug up rough nettles, which when handled wound,  
And prickly thistles—planting in their place  
Snowdrops that bow their heads with trembling grace,  
Soft violets that shyly shrink from sight,  
And clustered cowslips gleaming palely bright.

Little recked she that her sweet lays had won  
Fame for another,—for her own self none ;  
Little recked she that no one soul on earth  
Could ever guess her genius or her worth.  
She breathed a calmer and a purer air,  
Nor felt the touch of mortal grief or care.

Thus when the purple dawn breaks cold and still  
Along a thousand leagues of crested hill,  
To our dull eyes the faint stars, one by one,  
Die in the lustre of our nether sun ;  
The landscape trembles in the summer heat,  
And pleasant sounds rise round, and odours sweet ;  
But in the heights of heaven the stars shine clear,  
Nor need the petty joys that soothe us here.



Again the scene is changed. From pole to pole  
The cloud-drifts in broad masses darkly roll ;  
Blue flares the forkèd lightning keen and fast,  
And the dim rain streams slanting down the blast ;  
But in the heights of heaven the stars shine clear,  
Nor feel the petty storms that vex us here.

## THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

BETWEEN tall feathery ferns, and gorse which glowed  
Like gold, there wound an unfrequented road  
Across a heath which gently rose and fell  
Until it ended in a wooded dell:  
Here some old oaks like sentries stood, and threw  
Their guardian arms o'er all that 'neath them grew;  
Whilst thorny shrubs, among whose dark leaves lay  
Blossoms like flakes of snow, the flowers of May,  
Sheltered this spot upon all sides but one,  
Where the faint rays of the declining sun,  
Or west-wind bearing perfume from the heath,  
Entered an arch of green leaves underneath.

And often when the heavens were blue I sought  
This shaded dell, which favoured quiet thought,  
And on a bank, half moss half flowers, reposed  
My limbs at ease, with drowsy eyes half-closed,  
And traced the floating shapes which fancy weaves,  
And listened to the murmuring of the leaves,

Until the sweet birds fluttered round, and shook  
Their little wings: at times the dusky rook,  
Or blushing redbreast, or brown thrush drew near,  
Yet watched my moveless limbs with crafty fear.  
Thus, while my life was young, this pleasant scene  
Would oft from bitter thought my spirit wean;  
Yea, like a book whose meaning fresh and pure  
Gives transient help to ills that seemed past cure.  
But soon with me, as with us all, it fared,  
From neither vulgar cares nor sorrows spared ;  
And in the world I plunged, and soon forgot  
Amidst new scenes that solitary spot.

And many years had passed, when once again  
I slowly traversed that wild, heathery plain,  
Familiar grown with grief, nor free from sin,  
Nor yet corrupted utterly within,  
And sought that leafy haunt, and hoped to find  
Peace, as of old, for my unquiet mind.  
The ferns waved with the wind, the gorse smelt  
sweet,  
The springing turf felt cool beneath my feet ;  
But sounds confused and strange, as I drew near  
The heath's last summit, grated on my ear :

The hammer's dull reiterated stroke,  
The sharp saw screeching through the tough-grained oak,  
The voice of men, curses, and vulgar cries—  
I started with quick pain, and raised my eyes.  
That wooded glen was desolate and waste,  
And nothing of its beauty could be traced,  
Save trunks of oak-trees, lying stripped of bark  
Beneath the summer sunshine, pale and stark ;  
And copsewood faggoted, in order stacked,  
And stumps of gorse and hawthorn rudely hacked,  
And all the flowery grass and herbage wild  
By heedless feet down-trampled and defiled.  
A row of houses stretched along one side,  
Of glaring brick, doors, shutters brightly dyed ;  
And coarse mechanics, with confused turmoil,  
Above, beneath, stooped hotly to their toil.

Man, o'er the wide world searching still for gain,  
Had found this spot, and scanned with scheming brain ;  
Measured, and purchased ; then with eager haste  
The loveliness which bloomed there had defaced.

“ Far other sounds await thee now, sweet spot,”  
I cried. “ A fiercer and more turbulent lot.

The spirit of sweet melody has flown  
To haunts remoter, and to man less known,  
And beauty from thy ruins has now passed,  
As, from the form by death's pale hue o'ercast,  
Glides forth th' unwilling soul, and leaves as prey  
To creeping things the cold disfigured clay.  
Far other sounds ! The world's brief tenants here  
Shall quarrel, love, laugh, sin, detest, and fear !

“ The scream of anguish and the voice of mirth  
In hideous chorus echo o'er the earth ;  
Man's obscene oaths and shouts, with murmurs sweet  
Of children playing, rudely mix and meet.  
Close where the wretch, whose course is almost run,  
Lies groaning for the death he yet would shun,  
A young girl laughs and sings unto the sun ;  
Around her fair neck golden tresses twine  
In curls, and joyously her blue eyes shine ;  
Nor knows she that a dying creature near  
Feels her sweet song a torture to his ear.  
Near where the culprit, who to-morrow dies,  
Watches the East with stiff and bloodshot eyes,  
With nought heard save his breathing quick and faint,  
Too mad for prayer, too hopeless for complaint—

Soon to be butchered with all pious care,  
Then, as a fossil beautiful and rare,  
Scent some museum's close and stagnant air—  
The judge who doomed him, ere those tears be dry  
Which decent habit called into his eye,  
Tells, o'er his wine, the trial to his guests,  
Simpers with ease, and with an effort jests.  
In the same church where earnest prayers ascend  
A girl plots ruin for some rival friend,  
And passions fierce from her soft bosom wring  
The sighs that seem from penitence to spring.  
The bishop, blessing all men rich and mean,  
In his own heart, perchance, excepts the dean ;  
The rector, begging mercy from on high,  
Scowls on his slumb'ring clerk with ruthless eye ;  
While close at hand in the half lit saloon,  
Amid the deep hush of a Sabbath noon,  
Some pallid gambler raves, to ruin brought  
By friends who guessed not the despair they  
wrought.

Thus vice with virtue jars, and merriment  
With woe, as hues on canvas wildly blent.  
And so these habitations that rise round  
Shall vibrate with the shock of jarring sound,

As a deep organ when some unskilled hand  
Wakens the music it can scarce command ;  
'Neath the rude touch the throbbing fabric rains  
Through all its cells confused and dreary strains,  
Groans and low sobs, and wailings shrill and clear,  
And quivering shrieks that vex the listener's ear."

Yet gentle visitations of delight  
Shall tremble star-like through this desert night ;  
Deep unseen joys that in the spirit dwell  
The memory of anguish shall dispel ;  
The hand of love shall be stretched out to save,  
And men forgive because their God forgave.  
For if this life from pain and sin were freed,  
No scope were left for any noble deed :  
Courage would languish, charity grow faint,  
Man would be neither sinner nor yet saint.  
But now the very griefs we feel the most  
Are seeds of blessings which we else had lost ;  
And through wrecked hopes and shattered joys unblest,  
And crimes we cherished once, but now detest,  
We reach the unseen home which is our perfect rest.

# Sonnets.





## GEOLOGY.

METHINKS it were a dull and thankless task  
To pore into the dusky depths of earth,  
And strip from off her face that comely mask  
Which hides the secrets of her ancient birth:  
To dive down darkly and through wandering veins  
Of slate or granite diligently plod;  
To rake up rubbish with exceeding pains,  
Muse o'er a pebble, analyze a clod,  
Gloat o'er some grinning cranium, pry and peer  
Into a reptile's spine, and meditate  
On petrified manure ; wid'ning our sphere  
Of ignorance, and lowering to a mere  
Mechanic mass, that world which was so late  
A source of Poetry, and Love, and Fear !

1838.

## OLD AGE.

'T is not the body's age, that most I fear:  
The warm limbs frozen cold, and dry, and weak;  
The fading of youth's colour from the cheek;  
The eyes, once as fair water pure and clear,  
O'erclouded; while the dull and feeble ear  
No more, though dearest friends beside us speak,  
Vibrates within, and many wrinkles streak  
The face; grim signs that th' end of all is near:  
For oh, more awful is the mind's decay,  
When all most pleasant thoughts which once were ours  
Are shattered by rough grief and driven astray,  
And a dark cloud upon the reason lowers;  
From such sad desolation of life's way—  
A soulless age—spare me, ye Heavenly Powers!

## MADNESS.

SAD hearted friend, pause ere thou pitiest those  
Whose brain deep thought has shaken, or the stream  
Of dazzling fancies or wild troublous dream,  
Or the dark shadow of remembered woes  
Has quelled into a drear and dumb repose :  
Pause, ere with rash compassion thou dost deem -  
That corpse-like silence, that tempestuous scream  
Of awful mirth, those quick convulsive throes,  
Deserving thy sad words, and hasty tear :  
Oh, merciful is madness to mankind !  
O'er such, sharp pain, and withering hope or fear  
Pass ever harmless as the fading wind,  
Whilst round th' invisible and restless mind  
Float sounds and phantoms of some happier sphere !

## WOMAN'S WORTH.

O friend, whose mind unfolded to my view  
The sweet adornment of its thoughtful store,  
As some closed flower unbare each delicate hue  
Slowly and softly to the morning dew,  
Thou hast revealed a vein of precious ore  
Which I had guessed not, dreamed not of before ;  
For aye till now I studied to eschew  
The gentle presence of fair womankind,  
Thought that with weakness worth was ne'er combined,  
And loved not those whom not as yet I knew :  
Deemed that their hearts, upon the world's wide sea,  
Like faithless beacons drifted to and fro,  
In nothing constant save in causing woe ;  
But now I reverence thy sex in thee.

## OBLIVION.

THERE have been times when sadly gazing back  
Upon the days departed, we have sighed  
That whilst along Life's rapid stream we glide,  
Years might not close behind our lonely track,  
As waves behind a vessel's, and subside  
Into a pathless waste, a night of time,  
A shoreless and immeasurable sea ;  
For so in youth, or age, or manhood's prime,  
The Past would know no stain of grief or crime,  
But would be, like the dark Futurity,  
Parent of wild conjecture, harmless guesses,  
Dreamlike surmise ; and Life would thus be free  
From all that wounds or wearily oppresses  
In the long vista of the memory.

## ANTICIPATION.

WE are borne onwards towards a day we dread  
With cruel speed ; though glimmering dark at first,  
And seen afar, its pallid dawn must burst  
Upon us, be our frames alive or dead :  
The day will come, howe'er the faint heart shrink  
In agony : we helplessly are driven  
Onward and onward towards the hateful brink ;  
No sweet delay by labouring thought is given—  
Time flows the faster on, the more we think !  
'T is like the wretch who hears the torrent rave  
O'er the near rocks ; swung in the dizzy surge  
Hears his own doom, and knows that nought can save :  
Him struggling wildly the deep eddies urge  
Over that cloudy brink where yawns his grave !

## ORION.

I WENT one night to rest when thick clouds bound  
The heavens in darkness deeper than the night's,  
And heavy rain fell on the swampy ground  
With such dull mournful murmur as invites  
The busiest mind to slumbers calm and sound:  
I slept, but soon woke starting, for the heights  
Of heaven were bare, and fast fled the dense swarm  
Of clouds; and through my casement, calm and vast,  
Shone old Orion's solitary form;  
Nor star, nor constellation else that space  
Did share : alone he shone there ; yet at last  
Methought he moved, first slowly, then more fast,  
Till he was gone. Strange stars thronged in his place.  
I grieved as for some old friend's vanished face.



## ON THE WAR MANIA OF FRANCE.

WAR—war is still their cry ! Fools, hath not time  
Yet taught ye, as it taught your desperate sires,  
Wise hatred of war's devastating fires,  
In that dread revolution, stamped by crime  
Most ghastly, tho' in aim pure and sublime ?  
Forget ye, then, thus stung by mad desires,  
That blood, when the last spark of war expires,  
Conquerors and conquered doth alike begrime ?  
Know ye who feign to arm for a just cause  
How horrible is blood ? And were that won  
Ye seek for, are there none might make ye pause ?  
Kindred and friends, whose threshold the fair Sun  
Of Peace now shines on ; whom your blind wrath draws  
Down with you in war's dark gulf, sparing none.

1840.

## Miscellaneous.



## I BLAME THEE NOT.

I BLAME thee not, though thou hast been  
The cause of my deep woe,  
For thou, thou couldst not have foreseen,  
Thou couldst not guess, thou never couldst know,  
That I should have adored thee so ;

Since sweet and gentle was thy heart,  
Thou wouldst have pitied me ;  
Thou wouldst have sued me to depart,  
Whilst yet my soul was merry and free,  
From thy most dear society :

I blame thee not, nor do I mourn  
That I can ne'er forget thee,  
For though from thee for ever torn,  
'T is sweeter thus to die and regret thee,  
Than to have lived and ne'er have met thee !

1840.

## A DAY DREAM.

SHE sat beneath the branches  
Of an old and lofty tree,  
And I lay on the grass  
And my head was on her knee :

The spot was green and sheltered  
On the steep side of a hill;  
The day was bright and clear  
And all around was still;

A valley stretched beneath us ;  
It was a pleasant place ;  
But I cared not much for that,  
For I looked up in her face ;

I looked up, and I listened  
To the sweet words which she told me,  
While her dark eyes all the time  
Did earnestly behold me ;

A sort of dizzy languor  
Possessed me as I heard,  
And I trembled so with joy  
That I uttered not a word ;

She told me that the tale  
Was false which men had said ;  
How she had loved another  
With whom she was to wed ;

She told me 't was most false  
She was another's wife ;  
But that she loved me dearly,  
And would so, all her life ;

She chid me very gently  
Because I had believed ;  
And the tears stood in her eyes  
To think how I had grieved ;

She took my hand in hers,  
And placed it on her heart,  
But that heart it felt so cold  
That I drew back with a start ;

Oh, misery for me !  
For suddenly she seemed  
To melt into the air ;  
I woke, and had but dreamed !

1840.

## THE MAD LOVERS.

I MET one day a beauteous maiden,  
And her poor heart I knew  
With wretchedness was overladen,  
For one had been untrue  
Who once with restless ardour burned  
To gain what now he spurned;  
So she was doomed to weep for aye and aye,  
Since though his love had ceased, hers would not pass  
away.

"Dear creature, give thy murmurings o'er;  
Others are on the earth  
Whose love will warm thy heart once more :  
Though *he* had little worth,  
Mistrust not *all* because one lied"—  
"I must, I must," she cried,  
And groans gushed from her louder and more sad;  
I looked into her eyes and saw that she was mad!



I met a youth of comely face,  
Yet drooping, dull, and wan,  
As though with grief or deep disgrace;  
For a sweet girl had led him on  
Till with wild love he wooed her,  
Then wondered that he so pursued her,  
And bade him "Go in peace," and laughed in scorn;  
So o'er her cruel words he never ceased to mourn.

"Take her advice who used you, friend,  
As sport for her weak mind:  
Depart in peace, and let this end  
Thy faith in womankind;  
Harden thy heart to all beside"—  
"Nay, nay," he gaily cried,  
And laughed, and seemed a moment to be glad;  
I looked into his eyes and saw that he was mad!

## LA FEMME SANS CŒUR.

I ASK thee not to love me ; only gaze

On my sad face without that shuddering scorn,  
Which in thy dark black eyes like lightning plays :  
Hatred or fear I could have better borne !

Gaze on me with cold glance of weariness ;

Gaze on me with stern passion's sudden flush ;  
But, if thou hast a woman's heart, repress  
Those eager scoffs which torture whilst they crush !

I ask not for thy pity ; men have loved

E'er this, and loving, unrequited, died ;  
And women, fair as thou, have seen unmoved  
Their deep-sunk anguish, smiling, whilst *they* sighed.

Pity me not ! Consult with curious air

The changes of my face, and of my eyes ;  
Sound all the depths of my revealed despair ;  
Watch my heart beat with woman's soft surprise ;

E

Hear the quick words my failing lips scarce form,  
My passion, and the strife of love with pride  
Driving my thoughts before it, as a storm  
Drives the calm clouds into a rushing tide :

I care not, so thy clear voice cease the while  
To quiver through my nerves, and through my heart ;  
I care not, so thou wilt but keep that smile  
Of merry scornfulness till I depart.

Think on the gushing tears I strove to hide ;  
Think on long anguish which I feared to tell ;  
Think on the comfort of dear hope, denied  
To me who know my hopeless doom too well !

Could I but speak the passion, strong and deep,  
Which, as the whirling billows lift the foam,  
Now lifts my helpless soul—could I but weep—  
Peace might yet visit my deserted home !

Oh, hear me with the silence of fixed hate ;  
Hear me unmoved ; I shall soon leave you free :  
Free to laugh lightly at my bitter fate  
With those thy proud soul deems more worthy thee !

Farewell ! Thy spirit is not like to ours ;  
A stranger, not of earth, nor of earth's ways ;  
But banished here, a being armed with powers  
To wound and torture, whom no pity sways !

Yet one word more ; if ever thou dost love,  
I pray that him thou lovest thou mayst wed ;  
But wedded—to thy madness, may he prove  
Loveless and cold as thou ; to mercy dead !

## THE DROWNED SON.

THERE sat beside the dark deep stream  
An aged withered form,  
THILE the forest shook and groaned  
Before the rushing storm;

A venerable man, yet clad  
In scanty garb outworn,  
THOUGH aye the keen rain on him fell  
Before the north-wind borne :

He trembled not, nor seemed to feel  
More than the lifeless stone,  
WHERE he without a word or motion  
Was seated all alone ;

He spoke not, but his eyes were fixed  
Still on that dark deep stream,  
WITH heavy glance as though he were  
Entranced in some sad dream :

The waters flowed on silently,  
The rain poured down his face,  
The wind still howled, but yet he gazed  
Upon the self-same place :

He never moved his wretched eyes,  
Nor from his lean cheeks passed  
The ghastly hue which fear and grief  
Upon them sternly cast.

The sun descends, shut in by clouds  
Beneath the unseen hills ;  
The grey light sinks away, and soon  
Darkness the whole air fills ;

The stream is hid from those fixed eyes,  
The bell of midnight tolls,  
The bat whirls round, the hoarse owl hoots,  
The toads creep from their holes ;

Then slowly rose that aged form  
From the damp splashy ground,  
And from his lips, a voice came forth,  
A miserable sound.

"Dear son, come forth, why tarriest thou  
    Beneath the mud and weeds ?  
The stream is cold, the night is dark,  
    A night for evil deeds.

" Each day I 've sat for ten long years  
    Upon this self-same stone,  
Beneath the sunshine or the rain,  
    Without one peevish groan ;

" And still I 've said when night-time fell,  
    To-morrow he will rise,  
And with the dawn sought this same spot,  
    But nothing met mine eyes,

" Save the dull waters rolling on  
    As they have ever rolled  
Since when around thy struggling limbs  
    I saw their dark arms fold;

" I cannot longer wait, dear son,  
    My heart is dying fast,  
Thou knowest that of this world's joys  
    Thou wast my first and last !"

Then all was still, save a quick splash  
    Heard faintly on the river ;  
One moment heard, and then the waves  
    Flowed calmly on as ever.



## THE FORGOTTEN DREAM.

FROM a vision sweet and holy  
I awoke with bitter sigh,  
And I prayed it might not wholly  
Leave me in my misery;  
But it faded, faded slowly  
As a meteor from mine eye.

And, alas, my soul is dull;  
I have searched, and searched in vain,  
For that dream so beautiful  
In the dim cells of my brain;  
Dark oblivion doth annul  
All except my waking pain:

All except the sharp remorse,  
To be snatched from wanderings sweet,  
Back into life's trodden course,  
Back to dust and noise and heat,  
Where weak men with flagging force  
Daily their old round repeat.

I have laid my listless frame  
    Underneath broad leafy shade,  
Till my wild thoughts without aim  
    In sleep's misty region strayed;  
But my dream was not the same  
    As the one for which I prayed.

I have stood on rocky height  
    And beheld the rising sun  
Struggle with the shades of night,  
    Till the eastern heavens dun  
Feel the triumph of his might,  
    Flushed with bright tints many a one ;

Yet though thoughtful rapture drove  
    Petty cares of life away,  
And my spirit soared above  
    This poor mass of mortal clay,  
Yet I missed that dream I love  
    In the glories of the day.

Into the black chasm of night  
I have gazed with reverent eye,  
Watching with a calm delight  
The mysterious stars on high,  
And the moon, whose circle white  
Trembles as the clouds sweep by;

I have seen the restless ocean  
Scourge and chafe its rocky bed,  
Seen the clouds in dark commotion,  
Seen the lightning glimmer red,  
Still I missed that deep emotion  
Which, when waking, from me fled.

'Twas a glimpse my spirit caught  
Of a life where, without end,  
Freedom of immortal thought  
Shall with loving-kindness blend,  
And the darkness round it wrought  
Death, and only death, can rend.

1889.

## THE WANDERING ROCK.

SAY then, oh silent solitary moon,  
Has life ne'er glowed within thy cheerless breast?  
Or art thou only bound in some brief swoon,  
Thy vital warmth and energy suppressed,  
And with the wrecks of ancient time o'erstrewn?

A noiseless region, desolate and grim,  
A rock most dreary, wandering bare and gaunt  
Through vacant space, whose caves and craters dim  
A ghostly silence doth for ever haunt !

No soft moist air enwraps that desert sphere ;  
No clouds around it fling their shadows grey ;  
Her face is bleaching slowly year by year  
Naked, unsheltered, 'neath the sun's fierce ray :

No ocean o'er her bosom rolls and heaves  
Its deep tumultuous waters to and fro ;  
No foaming stream through rock and valley cleaves  
Its headlong path down to the plains below.

Is nature dead? Does no green thing adorn  
Thy silent places—no sweet drooping flowers  
Unveil them coyly to the gaze of morn ;  
No blooming copses, no thick fragrant bowers,  
No forests by the strong wind tossed and torn?

Does then, oh moon, no beautiful creature dwell  
Upon thy rugged plains ; no shape endued  
With soul, muse on earth's sun-illumined shell,  
And weak as we, in vague bewildered mood,  
Its meaning and its history strive to tell?

Oh floating desert, island lone and bare  
In Heaven's wide sea, perchance the time is near,  
When a pure veil of elemental air  
Shall on a sudden fold thy noiseless sphere,

And trembling with deep joy thou shalt perceive  
Life's spirit soothe thee with its healing wing,  
And o'er thy bleak and naked ruins weave  
The soft green verdure of a maiden spring ;

Then shall a tumult of sweet sounds ascend,  
And with the roaring of the wild sea-waves,  
And murmurs of the rocking forest, blend,  
Wakening strange echoes in thy secret caves ;

And to the upturned eyes of earthborn men,  
The features of thy face shall grow less keen ;  
Each splintered height, each scarred and jagged glen  
Shall seem enveloped in a haze serene ;

The shadows of swift clouds shall o'er thee rush,  
Thy waving plains shall gleam with flickering light,  
Thy snow-capped mountains, like our own, shall blush  
At sunset, and then fade to deathlike white.

But who of mortal men shall guess thy doom?  
Perchance, as our own earth, condemned to prove  
At first the parent, and at length the tomb,  
Of all the living things that o'er thee move ;

Perchance reserved for a more peaceful lot,  
Free from the curse which bids all fairest forms  
And creatures of this earth, fail, die, and rot ;  
Free from sharp pain and grief, and passion's storms ;  
A scene of sinless joy, where death is not.

1839.

## A GLEAM OF PEACE.

THERE are quiet musings deep  
Where the spirit may find rest,  
As the weary bird finds shelter  
In the green tree's shady breast :

There's a thought to give us peace,  
Though a ghastly shape float round,  
Round and round us as we move,  
Seeking when and where to wound :

Grasp the thought, embrace it thou  
Who oppressed and wretched art,  
As a shelter, as a hope,  
Fold it to thy fearful heart ;

For the life we live is fleeting  
On towards an unknown time ;  
Look thou forward—gaze not back  
On the fading path of crime :



Banish hateful dreams departed;  
Cast them forth, as when from sleep  
We on waking strive to chase  
Visions that had made us weep :

Life impels the spirit onwards  
As the wind drives on the bark,  
Though the waves may grow more rough,  
Daily gleams the coast less dark :

Bear it thou with faithful heart,  
Bear it with the hope which springs  
From the humbling sense of guilt  
And the thirst for holier things.

Then what matter if awhile  
Thou must writhe in earthly grief ;  
Life is drifting t'wards its end,  
Cling to thy assured belief !

## A SINNER'S GRATITUDE.

THE shadow of the rushing clouds  
Climbs up the steep hill-side ;  
The sun in tranquil glory flings  
His lustre far and wide :

I gaze upon the happy scene,  
And feel the pleasant wind  
Pass o'er my face, as tidings sweet  
Over an anxious mind ;

I hear the voice of melody  
From all the fields ascend ;  
The birds sing in the rustling trees  
Which o'er the waters bend :

I see ; I hear ; and marvel why  
The beauty of this earth  
Wakes not my heart, as once it waked,  
To innocent sweet mirth !

But a sad weight of gratitude  
Hangs, like a heavy chain,  
All motionless and icy cold  
Upon my careworn brain :

Oh Being, which hast given me life,  
And let loose for brief space  
My soul upon the world, I know  
That I am weak and base !

I know that I deserve not joy ;  
I know that I have erred ;  
Each breath we draw but gives us force  
For sinful thought or word !

The forest waves its branches green ;  
The sun is on the hills ;  
A beautiful clear sound of joy  
Thro' all the deep earth thrills.

I yearn to worship, to adore,  
To tell the thoughts I feel,  
The thoughts before whose rushing stream  
My spirit seems to reel !

Oh, let them in strong words float forth  
Upon the boundless air,  
And carry with them to thy throne  
This burden of despair !

LINES WRITTEN ON THE DEATH OF  
A SISTER.

His eyes are dull with weeping,  
His cheeks are pale and wan;  
Oh, would that he were sleeping,  
So his memory might be gone !

A woman's tears flow fast,  
Freely and fast they flow,  
Till the first blind shock be past  
Of desolating woe ;

But he, he is a man,  
Strong of mind and firm of limb—  
He cannot as a woman can  
Weep grief away from him :

Drop by drop those tears are strained  
From the inmost heart like blood ;  
Little comfort is there gained  
By that cruel scorching flood !

Oh, would that he might sink  
In the vacant gulf of sleep;  
There he might think, and think  
Of things less real, less deep :

The frenzy of a dream  
Saves us from thoughts of earth,  
And his dreary brain might gleam  
With flitting, foolish mirth :

The sad wind howls and mutters,  
'Tis a drowsy sound, they say;  
Close and make fast the shutters  
Against the light of day:

Lie down, unhappy one,  
There, where no rays can mock thee  
Of the bright, joyous sun;  
Sorrow to sleep shall rock thee.

A form has ceased to move,  
A face is seen no more,  
A spirit full of love  
Wears not the garb it wore:

He mourns the loss of her  
He loved in tender truth,  
One who did minister  
To his soul's wants in youth ;

For each by look or word,  
Words such as childhood finds,  
Shared the faint thoughts that stirred  
Within their innocent minds :

From glad and dreamlike lore,  
And out of common things,  
They drew abundant store  
Of sweet imaginings :

In quiet thoughtful trances  
Their hearts together beat,  
The while their eager fancies  
Would in glad converse meet.

Her childhood soon passed by, -  
And thought and beauty strove  
In her dear face for mastery,  
Mingled with faith and love.

Emotions pure yet strong  
Slept in her patient heart,  
Till in some low, sweet song  
They gently would depart:

"She should have died hereafter,"  
The world has not had time  
In the memory to engraft her,  
As a flower of perfect prime ;

She breathed not on mankind  
All the sweetness which her soul,  
Like the spring's wandering wind,  
From natural objects stole.

Alas, we well may grieve  
O'er the wisdom of the lays  
She tranquilly did weave  
In the morning of her days ;

For her soul, those sweet lays shew,  
Was a beauteous wilderness  
Which she herself scarce knew,  
And we ourselves far less :



She left us glimpses bright,  
Like drops of scattered spray,  
Of the fountain of pure light  
That in her soul did play ;

That fountain now is dry,  
Dead to all mortal sense,  
O'er the bare bleak strand we sigh,  
Whose waters have passed hence.

Her heart's familiar home,  
This earth, shrank from her sight,  
And the blue air-wrought dome  
Was buried in thick night :

She has parted from the frame  
That was folded round her here,  
Call it no fonder name,  
That pale corpse in the bier !

From its fair but frail abode  
By the touch of death set free,  
Her spirit calmly flowed  
Into dim eternity,

As a strain of music holy  
Leaves its earthly resting-place,  
By strong hand delivered slowly,  
Floating into airy space.

And all blest souls on earth  
Shall be lifted one by one  
From the low sphere of their birth  
Into high communion,

Like drops of dew ascending  
Softly into the sky,  
Till in one vast cloud blending  
They float serene on high.

Lie down, thou man of woe,  
Till the calm gloom around  
Into thy being flow,  
And stifle sight and sound.

His limbs grew more at rest,  
His breathing grew less wild,  
Sleep drew him to her breast,  
Like a young feeble child:

The brow was calm and still,  
The anguish slowly glided  
From the lips, and the quick thrill  
Of the heated pulse subsided.

Wake him not. Nay, if, perchance,  
He sleep, and sleep for days,  
Stir him not from that long trance,  
Let him on false visions gaze :

What if he should wake no more ?  
To behold dear friends is sweet :  
There are many gone before  
Whom it were deep joy to meet !

1840.

## MIDNIGHT AT FLORENCE.

STRETCHED on a chair, which once was not so hard,  
At midnight here, with door and windows barred,  
I sit and gaze upon my silent room,  
By sullen lamplight scarce redeemed from gloom.  
Two tarnished mirrors hang against the wall,  
Bent sadly forward as though prone to fall;  
Each at the other stares in weary mood,  
With self-same shades and dingy lights indued,  
And so must ever stare, till darkness flings  
Her charm around and veils all earthly things:  
And here and there eight old chairs stand forlorn,  
Faithful supporters still, though cracked and worn;  
Some thrust into the midst, as though they strove  
With bustling effort from their place to move,  
And with aspiring legs had left behind  
Their brethren to adventures less inclined:  
A carpet, once of bold and rich design,  
Where flowers, suns, stars in happy art combine,

Now worn by scornful feet dejected lies,  
Faded and patched, and sadly shrunk in size ;  
And curtains drooping o'er the window frames,  
Like the rejected robes of careless dames ;  
A door morosely creaking when it's stirred ;  
A bell with but one fault—'t is never heard !  
A rugged sofa, stern and inhumane,  
Reserved for guests we wish not to remain ;  
A dusty hearth where fuel, when 'tis dear,  
Is slow to warm, but prompt to disappear ;  
A ceiling mildewed with foreboding stain  
Of soaking snow or penetrating rain ;  
And 'neath my trembling arm and 'neath my hand,  
By wintry breezes comfortably fann'd,  
A marble table, smooth and very cold,  
Which one slim leg doth awkwardly uphold,  
A household tombstone, gaunt, and quaint, and tall,  
Dogged to move, but prompt enough to fall.

I gaze around. Without the rain pours fast,  
Against the walls and echoing windows cast ;  
A darkness deeper than is wont has spread  
Through the long streets and clouded skies o'erhead ;

I feel that the sweet land which is my own  
Lies far away, and I am here alone,  
Alone save that one dear companion shares  
And half removes the weight of earthly cares.

I am in Florence, that old city stained  
With horrors past, and crimes which have remained.  
Once, as within the veins of living man,  
Blood down her ghastly streets in torrents ran,  
When brother against brother drew the sword,  
And dearest friends for one word were abhorred.  
Vainly her beauty is before me spread ;  
Tis tainted with the memory of the dead !  
A ghostly horror creeps from street to street,  
I hear the distant tramp of rushing feet ;  
I hear the clash of arms, the fiendish yell  
Of rage, and clamour of the watch-tower bell !

Oh, palaces of sombre aspect vast,  
Your iron chains, grim relics of the past,  
Tell of those dreadful days when anguish, blent  
With triumph, down your streets shrill echoes sent ;  
Broken and old they hang at length at rest,  
With ye surviving famine, want, and pest.

What scenes through your old halls in varied train  
Have swept, like visions through a sleeper's brain !  
What shrieks along your corridors have burst,  
What sights of horror glared, and cruelties accursed !  
The plague has waved its poisonous wings above  
Your roofs, and paralysed both hate and love ;  
'Twas like heaven's anger, long delayed, which fell  
With all the horror of a mortal hell,  
On that bad city, welching in one flood  
The slaves of selfish lust, and votaries of blood.  
Yet some there were who sought a better lot,  
And cherished thoughts the multitude forgot ;  
Felt the pure flame of virtuous hope, which dares  
To struggle still, though tyranny ensnares ;  
And mused on the inevitable hour  
When, on the strongholds of despotic power,  
The awful wrath of nations shall be poured,  
And snatch from guilty hands the sceptre and the sword :  
Such visions, rapid as a falling star,  
Gleamed through the smoke and dust of fiendish war.  
Great men have gazed in anguish and in pride  
On those dark structures where your sons abide ;  
They o'er your terraces and gardens, graced  
With orange trees and fragrant shrubs, have paced,

Plunged in most thrilling thought, whilst overhead  
The depths of your blue skies were calmly spread;  
The contemplation of that menaced state,  
Encircled by cold doubts and crafty hate,  
Wasted their noble minds in thoughtful fear;  
They trembled at the moment which was near,  
But when that moment came all dread had past,  
And the determined will stood fixed and fast :  
They have beheld at midnight's silent hour  
The dusky form of that old mouldering tower,  
Which from your famous palace stern and sad  
Arises, with dim signs and trophies clad;  
They have beheld, and loved, and studied all—  
The sturdy mass of your encircling wall,  
The graceful spire, adorned with crafty art,  
The mighty dome, smooth, perfect in each part :  
Here have they wept o'er liberty's decay,  
Here striven in vain her downward course to stay.

Thou hast given birth to brave and glorious men  
Who, with the sword, or with the silent pen,  
Flung such a light on freedom's solemn name  
That craven hearts were dazzled into shame :



Yea, from amidst confused and vulgar crime—  
A hideous waste—such beings rose sublime,  
As, from yon darkened city—spire and tower  
And swelling dome rise forth in conscious power.  
For there were days when Florence stood alone,  
Whilst one by one all other states fell prone,  
And she uplifted, in loud accents bold,  
Her solitary voice, and still foretold  
The schemes of tyrants congregating round,  
Watching the moment when to strike and wound ;  
And none believed her voice, and none gave aid,  
Save that base aid by which she was betrayed.

Last of Republics thou ! Of all around—  
Fair cities, wealthy states, laid low and bound  
In chains which dripped with vainly lavished blood !  
On these the tyrant trampled unwithstood ;  
But thou wast free ! The outcast and the slave  
Sought then the shelter which thy old walls gave,  
And half forgot the keen axe swung in air,  
The grinding rack, the stake's heart-sickening glare.  
Oh, race of Medici, to you she owes  
To you, alike her persevering foes,

Whether in sinful pomp at home ye reigned,  
Bribing with gifts the people ye had chained,  
Whether, when cast forth from the city's gate,  
Remorseless culprits, through each hostile state,  
Seeking revenge ye wandered, and still planned  
Disastrous treason 'gainst your native land,  
To you she owes the downfall of her name,  
Her vanished strength, and her historic shame !

So whilst those gloomy scenes, on which I mused,  
Lay spread before me dreary and confused—  
As a strange country seen from steepest height  
At the dull hour dividing day from night—  
A sudden clamour echoing down the street  
Burst on my ear, and roused me from my seat;  
'T was the harsh rattle of revolving wheels  
Whirled o'er the stones like thunder's distant peals;  
And horses' hoofs that clashed and clattered by,  
And crack of whips, and voices raised on high;  
Chariots returning with their sleepy load  
From some gay stranger's sumptuous abode,  
From some laborious feast, or fancy ball  
Which lends long absent beauty unto all.

Yea, what a change is here ! Yon solid door,  
Through which rough steel-clad forms were wont to pour,  
Intent on savage deeds, with sword in hand,  
Forth rushing 'gainst a Guelph or Ghibeline band,  
Now flung, on well oiled hinges, wide apart,  
Admits the joyous and the light of heart;  
Those marble floors, once smeared with human gore,  
By capering forms are traversed o'er and o'er.  
For from old Florence now has horror fled,  
Feuds, and conspiracies and hate and dread;  
Her streets are thronged with listless refugees,  
Seeking health, gaiety, or worldly ease ;  
Within her galleries lounge a motley group  
Who stare and yawn and stretch the neck and stoop ;  
With eye-glass here two men of fashion gaze  
Idly on Venus, and condemn or praise,  
Discuss her ankle, criticise her knee,  
And think she much resembles Lady B.  
Here three young ladies, and their nurse, allowed  
For a rare treat to join the ogling crowd,  
With screams their innocent delight proclaim  
At some choice picture's richly-gilded frame.  
Some female tourist here perchance we find  
With the boldness of a manly mind,

Who stalks through Florence with complacent air  
And on her beauty turns a listless stare ;  
Thinks after mountains, churches cannot please,  
And asks if statues can be named with trees ?  
A buzz floats round as in a crowded hive,  
By turns flirtation and mild scandal thrive.

The sounds have ceased ; the rush of wheels is o'er,  
The streets are silent as a sea-less shore.  
My lamp begins to wane, and feebler heat  
Comes from the stove on which I rest my feet ;  
Discomfort slowly steals through nerve and bone,  
And my faint spirit learns a humbler tone :  
Why grandly carp at Ghibeline and Guelph ?  
Take first a quiet measure of yourself.  
Why mock and scold the modern folk outside ?  
For you and them the world is amply wide.  
Do your own duty ere the last hour come,  
And till you've done it, best be wisely dumb.  
So to my bed I hasten well-inclined,  
And brush pretentious musings from my mind.

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